

Department of Rehabilitation Services**Testimony before the Human Services Committee - March 3, 2016****H.B. No. 5438 (Raised) An Act Deleting Obsolete Statutory Provisions Concerning Workshops for People with Disabilities.**

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Markley, Representative Wood and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Amy Porter. I am Commissioner of the Department of Rehabilitation Services and I would like to thank the committee for raising this bill and for the opportunity to testify today regarding H.B. No. 5438 - *An Act Deleting Obsolete Statutory Provisions Concerning Workshops for People with Disabilities.*

This bill is intended to remove statutes concerning our agency that have become obsolete. Most of the bill addresses language regarding the former workshops that were once operated by the agency, most particularly by our Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB). As some of you may recall, those workshops were closed in 2003 and have not been re-opened. More importantly, we have no plans to ever again operate such workshops as they are no longer part of our agency's model of providing work opportunities for people with disabilities. Our focus is now on placing our clients in mainstream, integrated work settings. Therefore we no longer need these statutes and Section 6 of the bill repeals them. You will see that section 1 deletes certain references to agency-run workshops as well. However, we propose to retain all of the language in that section that refers to workshops operated by private providers. Our aim is not to disrupt the services and programs provided by these important community partners.

Section 2 of the bill has two purposes. First, it makes clear that the dollar limit on the very specialized services we provide to our clients who are deafblind does not limit the other, general agency services, such as we offer to all of our clients, that we can provide to people with deafblindness. Second, the section clarifies in statute what these specialized services are, namely, "community inclusion" services. Community inclusion services help people who are deafblind take part in community life outside the home despite the severe challenges that sometimes make everyday activities extremely difficult. You should note that with these changes, there is no longer a need for CGS. Sec. 10-310 and so that section is proposed for elimination in Section 6 of the bill.

Section 3 of the bill makes the adoption of regulations concerning rate setting for our sign language interpreters permissive rather than mandatory. We have found, as did the Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired (CDHI) for many years before us, that the setting of these rates does not require a process as elaborate or complex as is normally the case when the promulgation of regulations is called for. We have been able to adjust these rates through a straightforward process of consulting interested parties and assessing market conditions.

Sections 4 and 5 of the bill make technical adjustments to the statutory text made necessary by the changes we propose elsewhere in the bill. We wish to thank the Legislative Commissioner's Office for their expertise in recognizing the need for these additional revisions.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.